

Clinton County
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Conservation
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*If you know someone that
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Prairie Creek Connection
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Meet the Project Coordinator

Hello! My name is Leah Sweely and I am the watershed coordinator for the Prairie Creek Water Quality Project. I work for the Clinton County Soil & Water Conservation District. My job is to help coordinate efforts and activities in the watershed.

I grew up on a family farm between Clinton and Goose Lake in Clinton County. My husband and I currently

live and actively farm in the same area. I hope my agricultural background will allow for open communication as I make contacts, schedule field visits, work with you to determine which conservation practices will benefit you and help you sign up for the cost share that is available.

I graduated from Iowa State University in May of 2004 with a bachelors degree in Agronomy. I have spent the past two

and a half years working for the Clinton SWCD on the Elk River Water Quality Project. I am wrapping that project up while starting the Prairie Creek project.



Leah Sweely
Watershed Coordinator

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*Creating a
community
partnership to
improve and
protect the future
of Prairie Creek*

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The Prairie Creek Connection

A Publication of the Prairie Creek Water Quality Project

Quarterly Newsletter

May 2008

Prairie Creek Water Quality Project Under Way

You are receiving this publication because you are on the mailing list for *The Prairie Creek Connection*, a quarterly newsletter. You may be a landowner or operator in Prairie Creek watershed, a business located in the watershed, a legislator, an agriculture service business, an environmental organization, a teacher, a community leader or a local stakeholder.

First we should take a look back to become familiar with how the Prairie Creek watershed project came about.

Lets begin with Prairie Creek appearing on Iowa's Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters in 2004. Two fish kills in the summer of 1997 contributed to Prairie Creek being placed on the

list. Sampling of fish and insects by the University Hygienic Laboratory through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Water Monitoring and

***What is a watershed?
It's the area of land that
drains into a stream,
river or lake***

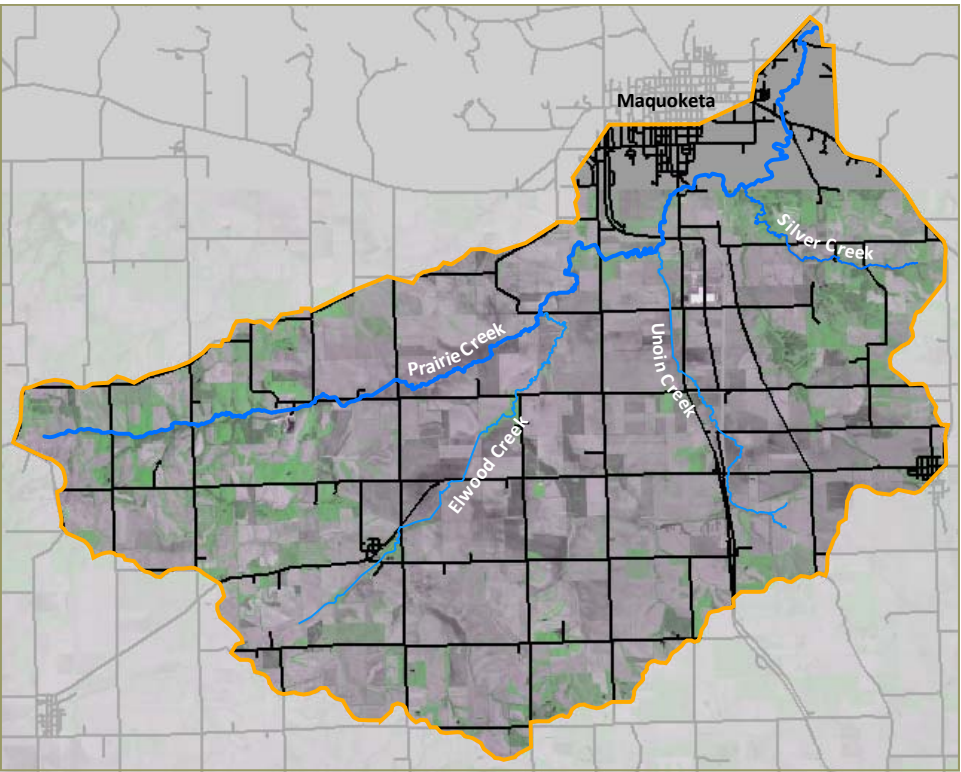
***Prairie Creek watershed
drains into the
Maquoketa River***

Assessment Section in 2001 found lower numbers of fish and insects than what was expected for this type of stream. Thus, Prairie Creek was assessed as "partially supported" (impaired) for aquatic life. Prairie Creek currently remains on the latest 2006 Iowa Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters for the "partially supported" (impaired) assessment.

Following placement on Iowa's Impaired Waters List efforts began by the Clinton County Soil & Water Conservation District to work in the watershed. In January 2006 the District submitted an application for a watershed development grant to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS-DSC).

The development grant was awarded in March of 2006 and a watershed assessment began. The assessment included things like: a landowner survey, a stream corridor assessment of Prairie Creek, stakeholder meetings, a livestock assessment and a land use and farming assessment to document crop rotation, land cover, tillage and existing
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Watershed Map



- ◆ This is your opportunity to voluntarily improve and protect the future of Prairie Creek
- ◆ Local decisions can be made on ways to improve water quality
- ◆ You will be sent information and contacted about activities and opportunities
- ◆ We would like to see you partner with the project to help change the impaired status of Prairie Creek
- ◆ Additional financial incentives are available for you to implement BMPs to help reach this goal

Understanding the Problems in the Watershed

According to the Iowa Section 305(b) Water Quality Report - a report that summarizes the status of Iowa's water quality, the lack of recent fish kills suggest that the 1997 fish kill and its impacts are no longer causing the impairment in Prairie Creek.

Through the watershed assessment process the following factors were identified as potential sources of impairment:

Sediment - the sediment

is coming from uplands in the form of sheet and rill erosion and from stream bank erosion. Sediment carries nutrients, such as phosphorus, into the creek and creates a silt/mud stream bottom.

Runoff - runoff can come from open lot livestock facilities. The high nutrient concentration in runoff can be lethal to fish and aquatic insects.

Habitat - little habitat exists in Prairie Creek which limits large

numbers and different types of fish and insects. The following table highlights the Best Management Practices that will be promoted in the watershed to address potential impairment sources.

Conservation Practice	Cost Share Rate
Ponds	75%
Water & Sediment Control Basins	75%
Grass Waterways	50%
Livestock Exclusion	75%
Filter Strips	90%
Riparian Buffers	90%
Stream bank Stabilization	75%
In-stream Habitat	75%
Ag Waste Sediment Basin	75%

Prairie Creek Water Quality Project continued...

(continued from page 1)

conservation practices being used on fields in the watershed.

The data collected during the development grant was analyzed by local stakeholders and management options to address the potential sources of impairment

were established. A grant application for a three year project to work in Prairie Creek watershed was submitted to IDALS-DSC in April of 2007. Based upon the application and the proposed goals to implement Best Management Practices

(BMPs) the application was approved for funding. The District received BMP funding and hired a project coordinator in March of 2008. With BMP funding and a project coordinator in place the Prairie Creek Water Quality Project has officially begun.

What is a BMP?

Best Management Practice

A conservation practice or management technique installed or applied to the land.

Community Watershed Meeting to be Held

The first community meeting for landowners, operators and stakeholders regarding the start of Prairie Creek Water Quality Project will be held at the Maquoketa Valley Chapter Izaak Walton League on Thursday, June 12th at 10:00 a.m. The lkes is located on 22nd St off of 200th Ave or South Main.

At this meeting you will

learn more about the project, why Prairie Creek is impaired and the desired outcomes of the project.

The community meeting will be your first opportunity to sign up for Prairie Creek funding. A sign up period for the first round of funding has been set up for the period of June 12th to August 1st. If you can't

make the meeting but are interested in a potential project or if you have questions please feel free to call or stop by the Clinton SWCD/NRCS office in DeWitt anytime.



Mark Your Calendar:

June 12th:
Prairie Creek community meeting

August 1st:
Last date to sign up for first round of Prairie Creek funding

Project Kick Off Event Planned

To get the Prairie Creek watershed project started locally and raise public awareness a kick off event will be held June 5th at Costello's Old Mill Wedding Site and Reception Hall.

Cooperating agencies

and the programs involved in the effort to improve the water quality in Prairie Creek will be recognized. Iowa Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Karey Claghorn and Iowa Department of Natural

Resources Water Policy Coordinator Bill Ehm will be present. A project logo designed by local artist Patrick Costello will be unveiled. IOWATER sampling and an ice cream social are also planned.